

NEW JERSEY

2000-2001

Guidelines and
Application

BEST

PRACTICES

**Deadline for Application to County Office:****NOVEMBER 27, 2000**

The Best Practices application is a public document. The information that you provide will serve as the official record. Review the application prior to submission to ensure accuracy and adherence to the guidelines. Type or keyboard information requested on this page and page 2, if applicable.

Category	<u>Citizenship/Character Education</u> (Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name	<u>Hometown Heroes</u>
Number of Schools with Practice	<u>1</u> (If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)

County	<u>Burlington County</u>		
District (Proper Name)	<u>Bordentown Regional School District</u>		
Address	<u>48 Dunns Mill Road</u>		
	<u>Street/P. O. Box</u> <u>Bordentown,</u>	<u>New Jersey</u>	<u>08505</u>
	<u>City</u>		<u>Zip Code</u>
Telephone	<u>609-298-3041</u>	<u>Fax 609-298-2515</u>	<u>Email</u>
Chief School Administrator	<u>John Polomano</u>		
Nominated School #1 (Proper Name)	<u>Clara Barton School</u>		
Address	<u>100 Crosswicks Street</u>		
	<u>Street/P. O. Box</u> <u>Bordentown,</u>	<u>New Jersey</u>	<u>08505</u>
	<u>City</u>		<u>Zip Code</u>
Telephone	<u>609-298-0676</u>	<u>Fax 609-324-2898</u>	<u>Email</u>
Principal	<u>Berenice Blum-Bart</u>		
Program Developer(s)	<u>Berenice Blum-Bart, Dr. Sue Onaitis, Judy Berkenkopf</u>		
Application Prepared By	<u>Berenice Blum-Bart, Dr. Sue Onaitis, Judy Berkenkopf</u>		
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature	<u>[Signature]</u>		

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLYApproved: ☒ Yes ☐ No County Superintendent's Signature[Signature]

**NEW JERSEY
BEST PRACTICES
2000-2001 APPLICATION**

Application Requirements: Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.

- RESPONSES** to the information and the statements below must be **ANONYMOUS** and **ACCURATE**. No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements
- USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM** on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4. Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
- Application must be **keyboarded on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format**. Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font must be used. (This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.)
- KEYBOARDED RESPONSES** to all the statements below must be **no more than a total of four pages**. Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response. Format your response for accuracy and clarity.
- The information on page 4 and the responses to statements must be copied on **one side of the page**. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be copied on **one side of the page**. Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keyboarded responses together, in that same order.
- The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.
- The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by **November 27, 2000**, with the Itemized List of District Applications form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary School <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School <input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School <input type="checkbox"/> High School <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	Grade Levels Pre K-6 _____ _____ _____	Practice Name <u>Hometown Heroes</u> Number of Schools with Practice <u>1</u> Number of Districts with Practice <u>1</u> Location <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban/City <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban With Urban Characteristics <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Small City/Town <input type="checkbox"/> Rural

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts) <input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual Education and Diversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education <input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support/Guidance and Counseling Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology <input type="checkbox"/> Gifted and Talented Programs <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education <input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development <input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement (family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment <input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness <input type="checkbox"/> Science <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education <input type="checkbox"/> World Languages

- Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.
- List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*,* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.
- Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.
- Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

*The 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.
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1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

Hometown Heroes, the practice proposed for award recognition, is an innovative practice that utilizes local residents to reinforce the development of core values through our **Character Education Program**. Our **Hometown Heroes** are business, parent, family, and community members who volunteer their time and talents on behalf of our students. Objectives are to:

- integrate core ethical values through the Social Studies, Language Arts and Visual and Performing Arts curriculum, linking them to school and community partnerships
- develop, reinforce and infuse civic and patriotic values and principals through an integrated curriculum approach, while fostering an appreciation of the significance of historical events
- provide opportunities for students to problem solve, and use critical thinking skills leading to their learning, carrying out and modeling core ethical values and intellectual virtues
- promote high academic achievement in language arts and social studies, where writing and research skills are linked to technology projects and oral presentations
- develop and strengthen family, staff and community ties as a way to engage long-term commitment to instructional programs that result in greater student achievement and have students experience academic learning through real-life connections and experiences

This practice is a collaborative effort and a shared vision between parents, school and community to develop our students' intrinsic motivation to become caring, responsible citizens. The program rationale, based on the **Six Pillars of Character Education**: respect, caring, citizenship, fairness, responsibility, and trustworthiness, provides a basis for a disciplined, safe learning environment and a code of conduct for our students. Implemented by the staff and community under the leadership of the school principal: it is an initiative to foster personal and civic values, leading students to a responsible adulthood. Frequent communication with parents, business, and community benefits our students. Through research, interviews and writing, students demonstrate their academic skills in language arts and social studies simultaneously integrating core values.

This practice is innovative because **Hometown Heroes** provide exemplary models of leadership and citizenship for our students at an early age. They demonstrate and reinforce the core values we teach at school. Their presence provides an ongoing code of ethics for our students and allows our students to identify, experience and internalize intrinsic core values. It ties community resources to our existing programs linking school, family and community in a common goal of enhancing academic skills and of instilling and reinforcing core ethical values in our students. Additionally, our **Hometown Heroes** serve as speakers and participants in programs providing opportunities for students to appreciate, understand, and accept others as they interact with our **Hometown Heroes**. Our heroes provide real-life experiences generating increased community involvement.

This program is the nucleus from which our affective and academically supported programs evolve. Exemplary programs based on the N.J. Core Curriculum Content Standards support our goal of high student achievement in daily class activities and routines. Our **Hometown Heroes** contribute to many dimensions of our school life by serving as student mentors and tutors, readers for Read Across America Week and classroom speakers, on topics such as the Civil War and cultural diversity. Assembly programs such as the NJ State Kindness Program and Stop Hate and Violence, promote further understanding of concepts. PTO events such as a parent training workshops on Peacemaking Skills, and participation in school-wide events such as Celebrate Our Differences Day further support our objectives of instilling basic core values of appreciation and respect for others.

One of the most significant contributions from our **Hometown Heroes** is their participation in our annual Veteran's Day Program which recognizes our **Hometown Heroes'** contributions within our community and surrounding areas as veterans of war. This program begins with a gathering of students, faculty, and community members around our school's flagpole. Veterans representing the branches of the armed forces join the school and participate in a formal flag raising ceremony which includes "The Pledge of Allegiance" and salute led by one of our heroes. A welcome by the principal and president of the Student Council recognize our heroes and the importance of honoring those who served our country. Poems and essays written by students in grades K-6 are read to everyone. Essays express the feeling of honor and bravery the veterans displayed during their service. All stress the importance of reinforcing our objectives of responsibility for citizens to work together to uphold our country's beliefs. Students, faculty and community join together to sing patriotic songs. Members of the Student Council accompany our heroes as they visit classes and serve as role models of the **Six Pillars of Character Education**. This opportunity for meaningful dialogue challenges students' thinking and integrates the development of intellectual virtues such as good judgement, as well as social virtues such as respect. Students learn the true meaning of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights by listening to the stories of personal sacrifice as told by the veterans in our community who fought to preserve those inalienable rights. A "Veteran's Day Wall of Thanks" created by parents and students is a visual display and another avenue to reach academic and affective goals. Creating this historical "story board" is an opportunity for students and families to spend time together researching information, gathering memorabilia, and sharing family stories. This "wall" is the students' tribute to the many family and community members who are veterans. Pictures, letters, medals, and short biographies of the veterans are displayed among a field of red, white, and blue. Students recognize veterans as family and community role models and are able to see concrete examples of and then articulate and model positive moral actions in class. This is one example of how our **Hometown Heroes** support our many programs such as co-operative learning, service projects and peer tutoring.

Our **Hometown Heroes** program promotes high student achievement in many areas:

Character Education – Our academic curriculum provides meaningful challenges to students that promote character development such as hard work, perseverance, honesty, respect and responsibility. Activities in the classroom promote decision making and peacemaking skills. Citizenship and responsibility are emphasized by our Student Council. School service projects and school leadership encourage opportunities for student engagement in employing core values.

Learning in the Academic Disciplines – Teachers utilize co-operative groups within and across grade levels and use journals for writing, current events for analysis and discussion, oral presentations and writing about real topics in class. This concept then extends their learning in the world of current events in the community, state, national and world levels. **Hometown Heroes** add another dimension to student achievement by "sparking" discussion groups prior to writing, presenting historical reenactments and assisting in the composing and editing of stories.

Technology – Students utilize technology to acquire and analyze information, solve complex problems in a group learning environment and to prepare presentations. Students are often assisted in these projects by our **Hometown Heroes**. Infusing technology into the curriculum facilitates different learning styles, and prepares our students to become productive members of the community, readying them for the workplace.

Democracy and Community Service: Our students gain fundamental appreciation of democratic values through the many experiences that we are able to provide with our **Hometown Heroes** program. The formal flag raising ceremony and joining together to sing patriotic songs provides a

shared experience which promotes democracy in action. Each grade level participates in at least one community service project yearly. For example, kindergarten students plant flowers to beautify our school environment, with **Hometown Heroes** donating plants as well as gardening expertise. **Hometown Heroes** receive letters and cards from pen pals from grade 3 students. Grade 4 students write and illustrate books to donate to the pediatrics unit of a nearby hospital unit with **Hometown Heroes** providing editing support for students. **Hometown Heroes** organize and operate our community's food pantry. They visit our school to explain the needs of our community members who utilize the food pantry; students then collect canned goods to stock the shelves of the pantry.

2. List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards, addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.

Social Studies Standard 6.1 focuses on the responsibility of citizenship in a democratic society and the individual's role in the constitutional process. The students acquired a better understanding of historical events and the political, and cultural ideologies behind those events by listening to and learning about the speakers, and researching events that were a part of their family history.

Studies Standard 6.4 focuses on the larger issues of universal human rights and inhumane behavior. Class discussions and interactions with "**Hometown Heroes**" provide opportunities to explore these issues. A structured format for speakers and facilitators provided guidelines for discussion. School-wide themes and school rules also provide a framework for our heroes as they mentor our students.

Social Studies Standard 6.5 addresses the social and historical understanding of global cultures. Students acquire these skills by examining the ethnicity of the combatants and the localities in which they fought. The various displays, medals, stories, pictures, and other family heirlooms become "bricks" in the "Wall of Thanks". Each "brick" evoked thoughts and emotions, which led to individual reflection of historical events and the people who shared them, and provides a way to address the need for appreciation, tolerance, understanding and acceptance of others.

Visual and Performing Arts Standard 1.5 is addressed by students researching and singing songs of the various cultural, historical and social events over different periods of time. At our Senior Citizen Centers, school assembly programs, and school celebrations our **Hometown Heroes** are the recipients of our students' researching, learning, performing and good citizenship.

Language Arts Standard 3.3 states that all students will listen attentively in a variety of situations to information from a variety of sources. **Hometown Heroes** serve as speakers for class lessons on topics such as: diversity, art, writing, cultures, historical events, and careers.

Language Arts Standard 3.1 & 3.4 focuses on student presentations to others based on reading of various materials and texts. Students read cross-curricular novels and shared them at Family Reading Nights and Curriculum Night where many of our **Hometown Heroes** participate.

Language Arts Standard 3.3, exercising personal thoughts in clear and organized language, is best exemplified as our students write poems and essays about core values of freedom and responsibility and share them orally at programs with our **Hometown Heroes**.

Work Place Readiness Standard 2 uses information and technology to improve learning. **Hometown Heroes** assist students in technology applications in their class work and projects.

3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.

- A 1996 assessment of our school identified a need to instill core values in our students. Our diverse student population, consisting of 20% on free and reduced lunch, 30% from single

parent homes, 20% multiply disabled, 20% disaffected and at risk of not meeting with success and a student mobility rate of 33%, over twice the state average, indicated they could benefit from exposure and experience with core values. As a result a formal **Character Education Program** was designed and implemented with citizenship and peacemaking lessons reinforcing the importance of respect for others, caring about the well-being of others, fairness and following school rules. Teachers assess these concepts through teacher and student led discussions on relevant topics e.g. the values and principles of American democracy, and teacher observation of student codes of conduct, and "habits of good citizenship". School climate has improved as measured by a **10%** decrease of behavior referrals and a **95%** increase in the use of conflict resolution skills throughout the school with over **100** conflicts resolved peacefully. Teachers' assessment of improved student self esteem and acceptance of others indicated greater student use of critical thinking and problem solving skills and individual student improvement of **80%** or better in these skills. Our increased number of students at our Peacemaker Award Recognition luncheons is another indicator of success.

- Grade 3,5,and 6 students on standardized tests score consistently 2/3rds of a standard deviation higher than the national mean score. On the criterion based ESPA test our grade 4 students have scored 7-20% over the state mean for the past 2 years and achieved 97-100% proficiency in science on the ESPA. Over 90% of our grade K-2 students scored 3 or better on a checklist based on a 5 point rubric. In the past five years standardized scores have remained consistently exemplary for all grade levels.
- Data on student engagement (94.3%) and use of peacemaking skills (92.4%) collected from our school-wide student surveys are significant as they measure direct student responses and reflect the students' actual sense of school engagement and climate.
- Our **Hometown Heroes** provide thousands of hours of support per year and make a significant contribution to our students character development. They serve as student mentors, and tutors and by actively participating in our school they model community service in action.
- Informational literacy and use of technology are other important needs addressed and assessed by teacher observation which indicate an increase in student use of technology applications resources by **10%** each year and a greater comfort level in accessing and applying information. Cross-curricular projects exemplify our increased student academic achievement and mastery of technology tools. With the help of **Hometown Heroes**, students and parents in school and at school-wide events, become more proficient in this area. Donation of books and grant money helps ensure that needed resources are available to promote high student achievement.

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

This program can be easily replicated. Identifying "**Hometown Heroes**" is the first step to a successful program. Recruiting of volunteers is accomplished through the principal newsletter, publicity through local newspapers, contacting community organizations, a local web-site as well as the parent-teacher organization. A volunteer form is utilized to access "**Hometown Hero**" names and talents for specific school events and classroom lessons that are designed around the **Six Pillars of Character Education** and the **New Jersey Core Content Curriculum Standards**. The use of **Hometown Heroes** will be unique and different in each school based on student's needs, building achievement goals and volunteer expertise, but the rewards and benefits will be many.